



a **filmscience & Neighborhood Watch** production  
in association with **Paradise City**  
a **Lab of Madness** film

# BLUE RUIN

written, directed and photographed by **Jeremy Saulnier**

starring **Macon Blair,**  
**Devin Ratray, Amy Hargreaves, Kevin Kolack,**  
**Eve Plumb, David W. Thompson**

**Verleih:**

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Running Time: 92 minutes | Language: English/df

### **SYNOPSIS- E:**

Dwight Evans is a mysterious outsider whose quiet life on the margins is turned upside down when he returns to his childhood home to carry out an act of vengeance. Proving himself an amateur assassin, he winds up in a brutal fight to protect his estranged family.

BLUE RUIN is a classic American revenge story that won the FIPRESCI Prize in the Directors' Fortnight program at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival.

### **SYNOPSIS- D:**

Der seltsame Dwight ist ein am Strand lebender Rumtreiber. Nachts bricht er in Häuser ein, deren Besitzer sich im Urlaub befinden. Hier schläft er und sucht im Abfall nach Essensresten. Die meiste Zeit verbringt er jedoch in einem kaputten, rostigen Auto. Auch wenn es das Leben nicht ganz so gut mit dem Landstreicher meint, ist es ein einfaches Leben, mit dem sich Dwight arrangiert hat.

Doch dann findet er heraus, dass der Mann, der seine Eltern einst ermordete, aus dem Gefängnis entlassen wird. Dwight packt der unwiderstehliche Drang, erduldetes Unrecht auszugleichen und Vergeltung zu üben. Er entfesselt eine Welle der Gewalt, die er bald nicht mehr unter Kontrolle hat.

### **SYNOPSIS- F:**

Un vagabond solitaire voit sa vie bouleversée lorsqu'il retourne à sa maison d'enfance pour accomplir une vieille vengeance. Se faisant assassin amateur, il est entraîné dans un conflit brutal pour protéger sa famille qui lui est étrangère.

A complete list of Film Festivals is as follows:

- \*Cannes Film Festival – Directors' Fortnight**
- Melbourne International Film Festival**
- Locarno International Film Festival**
- Deauville American Film Festival**
- Toronto International Film Festival**
- Fantastic Fest**
- Chicago International Film Festival**
- Hamptons International Film Festival**
- \*\*Hawaii International Film Festival**
- Philadelphia Film Festival**
- \*\*\*AFI Fest**
- \*\*\*\*Gijon International Film Festival**
- Starz Denver Film Festival**
- \*\*\*\*\*Virginia Film Festival**
- Torino Film Festival**
- Marrakech International Film Festival**
- \* FIPRESCI Prize (Parallel Sections)**
- \*\* Halekulani Golden Orchid Award for Best Narrative (tied)**
- \*\*\* Grand Jury Award for New Auteurs, Best Storytelling**
- \*\*\*\* Best Director**
- \*\*\*\*\* Programmer's Award: Best Narrative Feature**

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

For a film that is essentially about kinship and family ties, the making of BLUE RUIN was itself a family affair—the support of friends and relatives being its core resources. For Brooklyn-based writer, director and cinematographer Jeremy Saulnier, this close-knit camaraderie was crucial to the fate of BLUE RUIN, whether filming in his parents' Virginia home for a gripping home invasion sequence, borrowing their battered Pontiac Bonneville (itself a key character in the film) for a 30-day shoot across multiple states, or turning to Macon Blair, his best friend of more than 25 years, to bring to life the central protagonist Dwight Evans.

Saulnier was keen on crafting a revenge thriller that combined the dramatic realism and procedural detail of works like Michael Mann's THIEF with the literary sensibility of George Pelecanos and Cormac McCarthy. "He wanted to initially focus on the minuscule, day-to-day steps that keep Dwight Evans alive," Blair says of his longtime collaborator. "Fishing, collecting cans, scavenging for food—those mundane steps that provide information for the audience, teasing out the mystery of this character little by little until his motives become more clear."

Blair describes central protagonist Dwight Evans as a homeless man who is so traumatized by an event in his past that he drops out of society, opting to lead a solitary life, scavenging the shores of eastern Delaware. BLUE RUIN opens in methodical silence with an unkempt and haggard Blair struggling to get by in his day-to-day life, foraging for food as he leads a nomadic, invisible existence out of his derelict Bonneville. But as the film progresses, and more information about the character's past is revealed, BLUE RUIN changes course, building to a fever pitch of intensity as Dwight grapples with the finer points of revenge.

But as BLUE RUIN progresses into its gripping second and final act, it takes on qualities of both the suspense thriller and the family melodrama. It's genre filmmaking elevated to artistic heights, owing to Saulnier's extensive experience as a cinematographer. Having most recently worked with acclaimed Baltimore-based filmmaker Matthew Porterfield (HAMILTON, PUTTY HILL, I USED TO BE DARKER), Saulnier noticed a void on the film festival circuit of independent thrillers with art-house pedigree. "There were very few independent genre films that really put themselves on the line," Saulnier says. "There was lots of jokey, self-referential material and plenty of loud, found-footage massacres. But there seemed to be a lack of traditional, quiet craft in genre fare. Making BLUE RUIN was an attempt to fill that void and strike a delicate balance between emotional depth and cheap thrills, catering to both art-house cinephiles and diehard genre fans."

BLUE RUIN came about as a collaboration between two childhood friends from Alexandria, Virginia, who have been making movies together in one form or another since the sixth grade, when they joined forces to film a cops-versus-drug dealers shoot-em-up on a borrowed VHS camera. For BLUE RUIN, Saulnier cites two main objectives: showcasing his ability as a director and showcasing best friend Macon Blair's prowess as an actor. "We also needed jobs," he admits. The film marks the culmination of a 15-year mission on Saulnier's part to cast Blair as the lead actor in one of his films. "He's the most dedicated actor I know," Saulnier says. "I designed the entire project around him and leaned heavily on

his understated and emotional delivery as well as his indestructible nature—he smashed through glass, leapt from windows, drank blood and endured a fairly grueling shoot.”

Saulnier and Blair went to school together in Alexandria before going their separate ways to different universities. After reuniting in their twenties for a series of short-films with their close-knit hometown production collective, they finally achieved their goal of making a feature film with 2007’s ultra-low budget horror-comedy MURDER PARTY, which went on to become a cult favorite. But by 2012, after several larger budget projects had failed to take off, and fearing their window of opportunity was closing, Saulnier conceived BLUE RUIN as a self-starting feature with his close friend in mind as the lead.

Blair’s virtuoso performance highlights the Brooklyn-based actor’s flair for both physicality and understatement, resulting in a transformative turn that required his presence in every scene of a rigorous, multi-state shoot. “This is a guy who is totally out of his depth,” Blair explains of his character. “At the outset Dwight is scared, hesitant, regretful and devoid of toughness. I did not have to try hard to locate the emotional reality of that. Over the course of the film, he transforms into something else entirely.”

To prepare for the role, Saulnier and Blair discussed the character at length for more than a year while Blair grew out his beard in order to appear more ragged and unkempt during the film’s mostly silent opening act. “Jeremy had a clear, crystalized idea of who Dwight Evans was and why he was making the choices he was,” Blair continues. “Having already had a close working relationship with him, I knew his shorthand.”

Saulnier describes Dwight Evans as a “kindhearted assassin who is thrust into a violent situation and comes face to face with his own ineptitude.” Compelled by love, fear and a distorted sense of justice, Dwight is a lost soul. “We watch Dwight flail in desperation,” Saulnier explains. “Along the way, we kind of fall in love with him.”

As research for the part, Blair referenced men he had met doing homeless outreach work in New York City—how they carried themselves and conducted day-to-day business. Most of all he turned inward in order to access a universal sense of loss. “Everybody has lost someone they care about,” Blair explains. “You can infuse the character with that. Everything Dwight does is based on this feeling of loss.”

The title BLUE RUIN serves both as a literal reference to the film’s motifs (the Atlantic Ocean, the protagonist’s rusted blue sedan, and his ill-fitting windbreaker) and as a reflection of the film’s stark, often brutal tone—not to mention Dwight’s precarious emotional state. Saulnier achieved the film’s complex tonal balance by staying true to his central character at every turn of the story. “By thrusting Dwight into a very typical revenge scenario, and then watching him completely screw it up, and letting the brutal, tragic and at times hilarious fall-out unfold naturally, we were able to explore new territory in the genre,” Saulnier suggests. “Wanting revenge is very human, but unlike typical film scenarios, Dwight isn’t a war veteran or any kind of tough expert—he’s a novice assassin. And a rather endearing one, I think.”

In contrast to Dwight’s marginalized outsider status exists the chilling family dynamic of the Clelands, the Central Virginia clan who emerge as Dwight’s antagonists. Organized, close-

knit, financially successful and extremely armed and dangerous, this rural cartel of a family makes for some of the most chilling screen villains in memory—because they are so ordinary. “From early drafts of the script, people assumed the Clelands were these toothless maniacs from the hills. I used costume, production design and music to deliberately steer away from the banjos-and-overalls vibe in order to portray them as a real family—rather well-off, actually—with a real stake in the story, and all of their teeth.”

While the terrifying Clelands are initially seen through the narrow, subjective filter of Dwight’s rage, by the film’s conclusion they are revealed to be just as human as BLUE RUIN’s hapless protagonist. “They’ve got some nastiness in them,” Saulnier allows. “But they share the same trauma that fuels Dwight’s quest. They are much more than simple antagonists.”

In keeping with its genre traditions, BLUE RUIN is not without its considerable bloodshed—as befits any revenge thriller with firearms being central to the plot. But Saulnier once again strived for something different, opting to use violence sparingly, in sharp jolts and bursts, employing as much authenticity as possible by turning to the best industry professionals he could find. As an unabashed fan of genre films—and an experienced makeup effects artist himself—Saulnier views cinematic violence as an art in its own right. But he remains conflicted by the implications of onscreen violence. “As the story took shape it became a very emotional experience for me in terms of the recent uptick in gun violence in America,” Saulnier admits. “There is no doubt that this film is ultimately a tragedy—a cautionary revenge tale. But the goal was never to preach about violence or gun control laws in the U.S. I knew I didn’t want to do a traditional exploitation film. I was interested in exploring cinematic violence, not celebrating it.”

Saulnier had immersed himself in the finer points of on-screen bloodshed working in makeup effects during his formative years. For BLUE RUIN, he wanted to acknowledge his splatter-film roots while only employing screen violence as a vehicle to amplify the story. “When there’s life or death in the balance, the stakes are high,” he says. “High stakes make for heightened storytelling.” For BLUE RUIN’s visceral bloodletting, Saulnier turned to his unit production manager Alex Orr, who had worked in Atlanta with makeup effects supervisor Toby Sells—an effects veteran whose most recent work could be seen on the hit FX series “The Walking Dead.” Orr couldn’t praise Sells’ ability enough, though his participation came at a price. “The effects in the film constituted the most expensive line item in the budget,” Saulnier admits. “But it was well worth it. Toby’s makeup effects upped the production value threefold and were brought to stunning life by our visual effects team, Justin Ball and Chris Connolly. There’s plenty of computer-generated enhancement but I’ll be damned if you can spot it.”

Close viewers will recognize a casting coup in the form of Eve Plumb as Kris Cleland, the family matriarch. An industry veteran beloved for her childhood role as Jan Brady on the ‘70s TV sitcom “The Brady Bunch,” Plumb delivers a striking cameo performance during the tense final scenes. “I was honored to have Eve sign on for the role of Kris,” Saulnier says. “Not only because of her consummate professionalism but because I thought it would be totally rad to see Jan Brady fire a machine gun on screen.”

Saulnier enlisted Powers/Kaplan Casting to round out the cast, surrounding Blair with an experienced array of players from every corner of the business. Amy Hargreaves—familiar to Showtime viewers as Maggie, Claire Danes’ sister on two seasons of “Homeland”—was the first to audition for BLUE RUIN and quickly landed the role of Dwight’s sister, Sam. “Her cold read of the dialogue blew me away and she was cast that afternoon,” Saulnier says. Kevin Kolack beat several other more well-known contenders for the leading role (as Teddy Cleland), while former child star Devin Ratray, who played Buzz in the HOME ALONE films, landed the role of Dwight’s high-school chum Ben Gaffney after initially reading for Teddy Cleland. “Devin was so good, and had such an intimate knowledge of the script, that I modified the role of Ben and offered it to him without a second reading,” the director says. Saulnier reached out to frequent collaborators Brent Werzner, Stacy Rock and Sandy Barnett to fill out smaller but no less memorable roles, resulting in a stellar ensemble that heightened Blair’s work.

BLUE RUIN filmed for 30 days in four states, largely employing locations Saulnier and Blair had free access to through family connections. “We worked our way down the coast,” Blair explains. “Everywhere we filmed was this nostalgic return to places that were prominent in our past.” A cottage in Dewey Beach, Delaware, belonging to a friend of Saulnier’s mother was used as a base camp for the small crew. Delaware scenes were shot on and around Rehoboth Beach, where they had vacationed as kids. When the production was unable to obtain permits for parking Dwight’s wrecked vehicle on protected shorelands, Fort Tilden, Brooklyn, stood in for the Delaware coast. For the tense nocturnal home invasion scene that plays out at Dwight’s sister’s home, Saulnier filmed in his childhood home in Alexandria, Virginia, where his mother still resides. Both the Cleland family compound and the rural cabin where Dwight reconnects with a high-school friend were located on the same Charlottesville, Virginia, property owned by Blair’s cousin.

The film relies on visual storytelling, focusing primarily on the native environments depicted on screen, a craft Saulnier honed working as a cinematographer on other productions. “I’ve always been a proponent of the story coming first—that it’s native to the environment and the characters depicted in the film,” he insists. “Matt Porterfield and I developed an aesthetic together; the exploration of space itself is key in his films and I learned a lot behind the camera about how much you can convey and what kind of tone you can employ through the use of space alone.” On a thematic level, BLUE RUIN is equally considered. “My cynical exploitation film became a deeply personal exploration of parental morality, family dynamics, and the end of patriarchy.”

Dwight  
Ben Gaffney  
Sam  
Teddy Cleland  
Kris Cleland  
William  
Carl Cleland  
Hope Cleland  
Officer Eddy

Macon Blair  
Devin Ratray  
Amy Hargreaves  
Kevin Kolack  
Eve Plumb  
David W. Thompson  
Brent Werzner  
Stacy Rock  
Sidné Anderson

Casting  
Original Score  
Costume Designer  
Editor  
Visual Effects Supervisor  
Production Designer  
Director of Photography  
Executive Producers

Harley Kaplan and Brandon Powers  
Brooke Blair and Will Blair  
Brooke Bennett  
Julia Bloch  
Justin Ball  
Kaet McAnneny  
Jeremy Saulnier  
Skei Saulnier  
Macon Blair  
Rosemary Edwards  
Eileen McGrath  
Karen Saulnier  
Tyler Byrne  
Alex Orr  
Anish Savjani  
Richard Peete  
Vincent Savino

Co-Producers

Producers

USA / 92 min. / 2.40 / Color / English/df

## ABOUT THE CAST & CREW

### **JEREMY SAULNIER (Director, Writer, Cinematographer)**

Born and raised in Alexandria, Virginia, Jeremy now works as a director and cinematographer in Brooklyn, NY. He studied at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and braves the corporate video world to finance his independent film habit. He directed and photographed the award-winning short "Crabwalk" (Clermont-Ferrand 2005), and the cult horror-comedy MURDER PARTY, which was released in 2007 by Magnolia Pictures. His notable cinematography credits include Michael Tully's SEPTIEN (Sundance, Rotterdam 2010), and his collaborations with director Matthew Porterfield: HAMILTON (Viennale, 2007), PUTTY HILL (Berlin, SXSW, 2010) and I USED TO BE DARKER (Sundance, Berlin, 2013).

### **MACON BLAIR (Actor, Dwight)**

Macon Blair was born in Alexandria, Virginia, and currently resides in Brooklyn, New York. His prior film work includes Jeremy Saulnier's MURDER PARTY, Steve Collins's GRETCHEN and YOU HURT MY FEELINGS, and JT Petty's HELLBENDERS 3-D. He has also written numerous comic books, including the graphic novel HELLCITY for Image Comics, and various AVENGERS CLASSIC stories for Marvel.

### **AMY HARGREAVES (Actor, Sam)**

Amy Hargreaves is currently filming the third season of the Emmy Award-winning Showtime series "Homeland." Film credits include: SHAME, DELIRIOUS, MICHAEL CLAYTON, BRAINSCAN, AGAINST THE CURRENT, WHEN EVENING COMES, EL CAMINO and the upcoming indie drama PRISM. Notable TV roles include: The HBO original film FLASHBACK, (CableAce nomination for Best Actress in a Dramatic Series or Special), "Law & Order SVU" (recurring), "Third Watch" (recurring), "The Following," "Blue Bloods," and "Person of Interest." New York theater credits include "Years of Sky" at 59E59, "Living Proof" at the Jewish Rep, "Trust" and "Expecting Isabel" at The Barrow Group.

### **DEVIN RATRAY (Actor, Ben Gaffney)**

Devin Rattray began acting at the age of six in commercials and television and appeared in his first movie (WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?) at age seven. He has appeared in over 30 feature films including SIDE EFFECTS (2013), R.I.P.D (2013), CONSTRUCTION, DENNIS THE MENACE, LITTLE MONSTERS, THE PRINCE AND ME, the upcoming NEBRASKA (2013) and HOME ALONE and HOME ALONE 2: LOST IN NEW YORK, in which he played Buzz, the less-than-pleasant older brother to Macauley Culkin's Kevin McCallister. Devin has appeared off-Broadway opposite Marissa Tomei in Wallace Shawn's "Marie and Bruce," and originated the role of Benji in David Rabe's "Early History of Fire." Television credits include appearances in the CBS series "Heartland" and MTV's "Damage Control." He has also appeared in every Dick Wolf show produced in New York at least once. Devin was born and raised in New York City, where he currently resides.



**EVE PLUMB (Actor, Kris Cleland)**

Eve Plumb started her acting career at age six performing in episodic television and commercials. After her five-year portrayal of Jan Brady on “The Brady Bunch,” she went on to appear in TV movies including DAWN: PORTRAIT OF A TEENAGE RUNAWAY and LITTLE WOMEN. Along with her television and film work, Plumb studied improv comedy at The Groundlings School in Los Angeles and appeared in a summer stock production of “South Pacific.” In 2010 she appeared at Lincoln Center with Florence Henderson in “Broadway Backwards 5,” and with Karen Ziemba in 2013’s “Broadway Backwards 8,” as well as two runs of “Love, Loss, and What I Wore.” She was recently seen in “Law and Order: Special Victim’s Unit,” “Army Wives,” and in the off-Broadway production of “Unbroken Circle.”

**ANISH SAVJANI & VINCENT SAVINO/FILMSCIENCE (Producers)**

With filmscience, Anish Savjani and Vincent Savino have produced fifteen feature films that have been nominated for three Independent Spirit Awards and screened at film festivals around the world, including Cannes, Toronto, Sundance and Venice. These films include Kelly Reichardt’s NIGHT MOVES, MEEK’S CUTOFF, WENDY AND LUCY and OLD JOY; Joe Swanberg’s ALEXANDER THE LAST, NIGHTS AND WEEKENDS and HANNAH TAKES THE STAIRS; Steve Collins’ YOU HURT MY FEELINGS and GRETCHEN; Jeremy Saulnier’s BLUE RUIN; Michael Palmieri and Donal Mosher’s OFF LABEL; Brian Savelson’s IN OUR NATURE; Geoff Marslett’s MARS; Bob Byington’s HARMONY AND ME; and Spencer Parsons’ I’LL COME RUNNING. Additionally, Anish was the recipient of the Producers Award at the 2011 Independent Spirit Awards. filmscience currently has a number of projects by emerging and established independent filmmakers in production and development.

**RICHARD PEETE (Producer)**

Born and raised in Western New York, Richard Peete attended the Savannah College of Art and Design before moving to New York City to pursue a career in film. Since then he has worked as a Prop Master on many award-winning films and television series, including BLUE VALENTINE, THE PLACE BEYOND THE PINES, HBO’s “Girls,” and Sundance Grand Jury Prize winners FROZEN RIVER (2008) and WINTER’S BONE (2010). With extensive on-set experience, Richard moved on to found Neighborhood Watch Films, a production company focusing on features, short films and music videos.

**JULIA BLOCH (Editor)**

Julia Bloch is a New York-based film editor who has worked on a wide range of projects, including Terrence Malick’s Palme d’Or winner THE TREE OF LIFE, Tom Gilroy’s THE COLD LANDS, as well as a music video for R.E.M. Before studying film at the European Film College in Ebeltoft, Denmark, Bloch received her B.A. in Comparative Literature from Columbia University and a Master’s degree in literature at the Université de Haute Bretagne in Rennes, France. In 2011 Bloch received the Sundance Institute’s inaugural editing fellowship in honor of Sally Menke.

**BROOKE BLAIR & WILL BLAIR (Original Music)**

Composers Brooke and Will Blair have been making music together since they were children. After years of touring and recording with numerous bands, most recently Philadelphia's EAST HUNDRED, the brothers transitioned into film music by contributing original scores to director Jeremy Saulnier's films including CRABWALK, MURDER PARTY and BLUE RUIN. They also contributed original music to the upcoming Austin, Texas, feature MAN FROM ORLANDO. Their advertising clients include Ogilvy & Mather and Google Zagat + MasterCard. They recently launched Blair Brothers Music, a scoring and production house based in their Philadelphia studio, and are currently working on music and audio installations for several Philadelphia museums.

**TOBY SELLS (Special Makeup Effects Designer)**

Toby Sells' Creature Make Up FX Shop, located outside Atlanta, has become the East Coast's premier full-service makeup and effects house. Toby has worked professionally as a Special FX Make Up Artist since 1983. He has been featured on The Discovery Channel's "Dirty Jobs," as well as in Fangoria Magazine, Scars magazine and on the websites Horror 101.com and Killer Film. Toby freelances for KNB EFX Group and Almost Human Inc. in Los Angeles. His film credits include WE'RE THE MILLERS, THE INTERNSHIP, THE ODD LIFE OF TIMOTHY GREEN, ZOMBIELAND, HALL PASS and THE RED ROAD. His TV credits include "The Walking Dead," "The Vampire Diaries," "The Following," and "Eastbound and Down."